PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 [16] A Salesian "Pioneer". The father Albino del Custo who has lived for 40 years in the forest, and who has completed admirable works such as a road 170 km long which he has opened and kept free from the constant advance of the forest through his energy.

Photograph 2 [17] The labyrinth of the virgin forest. The expeditionaries had to open a route with great difficulty through the great extentions of virgin or almost unexplored forest, where dangers represented above all by reptiles abounded.

Photograph 3 [17] The work of the missionaries. La Obra de Don Bosco maintains a series of missions in the interior of Ecuador which are fulfilling a great work of civilization. Here is the father Giovanni Giannassi who has worked for 18 yrs on a grammar of the Jíbaro language.

Photograph 4 [18] Wives of Jíbaro savages. They live near the Lupano River. This tribe is cannibal, but they only eat the flesh of Indians of other races.

Photograph 5 [18] All good friends. The author and his companions, Michele Car, Francesco Bornengo and Luigi Bosio; the first of these lost his way for a while and after a long search the others found him in the cabin in which they were photographed with their new friends the Jíbaros.

Photograph 6 [19] Bridge in the heart of the forest. It was extended across the Negro River through the great efforts and sacrifices of the Salesian missionaries; it is very beautiful and safe in spite of its rusticity.

Photograph 7 [20] A little Indian sultan. A savage of the Napocón River with his three wives who seem to live happily, sharing the task of serving their husband and master who does not trouble himself for anything except hunting and warfare.

Photograph [21] 8 Jíbaro woman. Her face is tattooed with a series of signs destined to conjure the evil spirits without fail; this happens to a great extent among the American tribes.

Photograph [21] 9 Typical representative. The Jíbaros are physically agreeable with well-proportioned figure and regular features. Sympathetic in their manner, they are characterized by an extreme love of independence.

Photograph [22] 10 Two examples of "Tchantchas." The Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales preserved these two examples of human heads reduced to a tenth of their regular size without injury to the regularity and fidelity of the features.

29: Vité--15 (1934) 1935 Jívaro
116, 121

On the 29th of last December my companions: Michele Car, Francesco Bornengo, Luigi Bosio, and I, left Genoa in the boat [motonave] "Virgilio," to study the life and customs of the Jibaro Indians, and, in particular, to film a motion picture on this curious race.

After fourteen days of navigation, we passed through the Panama canal and then followed the Pacific to Guayaquil where we disembarked at our first destination. After a short rest, the Andean railway which crawls along an incline of some 4,000 meters, took us to Quito, the capital of Ecuador and the highest in the world.

From there we went on to Cuenca which was to be the base of our expedition and where the Salesian missionaries have their principal see. Their civilizing work radiates across many kilometers of savage or almost unexplored lands up the heart of the formidable forests inhabited by the Jíbaros.

In Cuenca we made our preparations, taking measures against the excessive humidity of the forest, which could cause damage to the filming apparatus, our greatest treasure. The complete absence of roads obliged us to organize caravans with native porters, mules, horses, and guides who could open up a route in the vegetal labyrinth.

From this point we went on to Pan and Gualageo. We then coasted the Negro River for almost 200 kilometers to Méndez, another see of the Salesian missionaries. From Méndez we followed the course of the Tutangosa River to Macas, where another mission marked the last vanguard of civilization; then we went along the Lupanos River and entered into contact with the "unexplored jungle."

29: Vitá --15 [3] (1934) 1935 Jívaro
116, 175

The Jîbaros are located at present in the southern end of Ecuador, adjoining the northern boundary of Peru, in an almost unknown region. Much has been contributed to their study by the Salesian missionaries who were of great assistance to the expedition.

We have lived with the Jîbaros, and, as a result, have been able to acquire a complete knowledge of their customs and language.

29: Vité --15 [4] (1934) 1935 Jívaro
116, 156

In regard to their mentality, it can be said that they do not possess the gift of natural poesy common to so many primitive peoples. They live in communion with nature, and from her they receive a great feeling for liberty and individualism. They live isolated from one another, and, at times, their dwellings are several hours distant from one another.

29: Vité--15-16 (1934) 1935 Jívaro
116, 595, 462

The majority [KS: of the Jíbaros] are polygamous, probably because everything is so constituted as to make it unnecessary for the man, who is the head of the family, to work. The women themselves endeavor to be many in a family in order to divide the work which covers everything from the cultivation of a small garden up to participation in the hunt, in which they play the role of dogs, discovering and following the prey and frightening it with cries and noises up the spot occupied by the man, the lord of the forest. The latter then strikes it with an easy blow of his lance; he does not humble himself whatsoever to pick it up, because it must be carried on the woman's shoulders. They are very jealous [16] and very devoted to their children. They are not acquainted with our caresses and kiss.

29: Vité--16 (1934) 1935 Jívaro
116, 136, 152

In this region where the rays of the sun scarcely penetrate, the road is rough and difficult, and there are nests of thousands and thousands of poisonous reptiles from which one must defend himself as best he can. Here lives the Jíbaro, the savage of the Ecuadorian forest, physically beautiful with a masculine and imposing beauty, congenial in aspect and at the same time terrible because he does not accept domestication.

29: Vité--16 [2] (1934) 1935 Jívaro
116, 202, 534

While we were advancing through this region [KS: the jungle], at first confusedly and then very distinctly, we made out the echo of the beat of the "dúndulos", a kind of drum which the savages use to call to their neighbors with some fiesta in view.

Once precautions were taken not to offend their sensibilities, we prepared our apparatus certain of being able to gather the documentation of their characteristic and barbarous custom, the fiesta of the "tchantcha."

We were not wrong, for around the Jíbaro cabin which we reached after a fatiguing march, this fiesta, which many of the Jíbaros still practice, was in progress. As soon as the designated victim falls under the thrust of his lance, the Jíbaro cuts off the head which for him represents his most precious trophy and carries it to his house on the point of his lance.

From this moment preparations for the fiesta of the "tchantcha" begin. In the meantime the women make plans for providing a great quantity of smoked flesh of pigs, chickens, turkeys and fish, as well as chicha which is their predilect drink and which is prepared exclusively by the women; they masticate the root of the manioc and then spit it into clay vessels, leaving it to ferment several days until it is converted into a delicious drink which is very alcoholic and nutritive.

29: Vité--16-20 (1934) 1935 Jívaro
116, 727

The hero of the fiesta meanwhile prepares the "tchantcha"; this consists of mummifying the severed head of the enemy, and, after a series of manipulations known only to them, to convert it into a little head, which although reduced a tenth of its normal proportions through the removal of the bones, preserves its primitive features perfectly and marvelously.

First they wash the head, and sew [20] the lips using a fiber strung on a thorn; then they place the head in a bowl of boiling water in which they have cooked beforehand leaves of various plants that grow in places only they know. The head remains for less than two minutes in the boiling water and emits a penetrating and very disagreeable odor.

Then an expert begins the operation of extracting the tongue and the muscles and the flesh around it. He carefully extracts all the bones, making use of knives of different shapes and sizes, while at the same time pulling the skin outward.

Next they fill the head, which has been stripped of bones, with a pap made with the soft part of certain roots, taking care that the contours of the skin retain their form. Finally they place the head, thus prepared, in a bowl with a kind of boiling oil made with seeds of other plants. After this proceeding, the head is reduced to a tenth of its natural size and mummified in an astonishing manner.

29: Vité--20-22 (1934) 1935 Jívaro
116, 126, 727

The expedition witnessed the fiesta as a privilege, for no stranger has ever been admitted to it. It was viewed from a height and the filming apparatus was disguised so that the savages would not suspect the true object of our presence. And so we were present at the fanatic exaltation of the hero, who, seated in the middle of a circle formed by relatives and friends, has in his hand the "tchantcha" and the homicidal lance. Children are excluded from this circle, but the women take part.

After the witch in ceremonial dress has purified the soul of the killer by his exorcisms [22] the orgy commences. It lasts several days and at times for weeks until the provisions prepared for the fiesta are gone.

(1934) 1935

Jívaro

While the frenetic dance continued and the piercing and rending shouts of the savages reverberated in the air to the mournful sound of the "dúndulos," we decided to retire, for given their great xenophobia, it would not have been strange for these Indians to have been overcome by a sudden access of fury against us, --profane spectators of their fiesta.

We withdrew cautiously and readied for any emergency, by no means at peace with the echo of the "dúndulos" which made it clear that the orgy of blood followed its normal rhythm, --a sign that the Jíbaros have not preoccupied themselves with us.

In the dead of night, we arrived exhausted at the most interior of the Salesian missions where we were received fraternally and surrounded with affectionate attentions.

29: Vité- -22[2] (1934) 1935 Jívaro
116, 122, 132

The appearance of the equatorial rains which arrived a month earlier than expected this year, prevented us from traveling across Ecuador and Brasil to the Atlantic. We were not able to continue our task after a month's sojourn in the interior of the country, and we had to return to Guayaquil where we embarked on our return to Italy.

29: Vité--22 [3] (1934) 1935 Jívaro
116, 122, 136

We had gathered together precious material, not to mention a collection of snakes, among which was one that transmits a fatal poison simply by coiling his body, without biting or giving pain, and we had attended a unique ceremony of authentic savages.